



MEMORANDUM
PUBLIC WORKS AND FACILITIES
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT DIVISION
County of Placer

TO: Board of Supervisors DATE: May 17, 2016
FROM: Ken Grehm, Director of Public Works and Facilities
By: Laurie Morse, Property Manager
SUBJECT: Property Management / Funding Agreement / Placer Land Trust / Agricultural Conservation Easement over 77.4 acres of Oest Ranch, Auburn CA

ACTION REQUESTED

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the Director of Public Works and Facilities, or designee, to finalize and execute the Funding Agreement to provide \$80,000 towards the Placer Land Trust's acquisition of an agricultural conservation easement over 77.4 acres of land near the southwest corner of Lone Star Road and Highway 49 in the North Auburn area of Placer County from the Oest Family Trust, at a total estimated County cost of \$85,000.

BACKGROUND

Since inception of the Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program (Legacy), your Board has provided significant policy direction and financial support towards acquisition of property interests that are considered the highest priority in terms of the Legacy objectives, particularly those properties that conserve landscapes and meets multiple Legacy objectives. Based on your direction, staff has long considered the Oest Ranch along Highway 49 as a priority for future Legacy acquisition since it meets multiple Legacy objectives.

For over 150 years, the Oest family has owned and operated its 437-acre ranch as a working cattle ranch (Attachment – Oest Ranch). Oest Ranch is a part of the Spenceville Conceptual Area Protection Plan which qualifies it for State conservation funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). Almost a year ago, Placer Land Trust (PLT) received \$182,000 in WCB funds and \$32,000 in Legacy Open Space funds that resulted in PLT's acquisition of a 36-acre conservation easement over the northernmost portion of the Oest Ranch thereby protecting oak woodlands and rangelands located along Hwy 49. In January 2016, Daryl and Sue Ann Oest (Owners) provided a Letter of Intent to PLT expressing their interest in permanently preserving its remaining properties through the sale of agricultural conservation easements (CE) to PLT.

Recently, WCB staff expressed strong interest in allocating its last remaining statewide Oak Woodlands Conservation Program funds to protect another portion of Oest Ranch. Given the Oest family's continued interest in selling CEs over their oak woodland properties, PLT has identified two parcels (APNs 075-070-068 and 075-070-021) totaling 77.4 acres located south of Lone Star Road and immediately west of Highway 49 (Attachment – Oest Property). This Property contains a large un-fragmented foothill oak woodland community, grasslands and irrigated pasture used for seasonal livestock grazing, and is located within the Placer County Conservation Plan (PCCP) Reserve Acquisition Area (Attachment – Oest Ranch Attributes).

The Owners are willing to sell a CE over the Oest Property for \$565,000 and this price has been supported by a recent appraisal. PLT approached County staff and requested \$80,000 in support of this acquisition. County funding would provide matching funds to the \$485,000 being requested from the WCB. PLT will cover the estimated \$200,000 in long-term stewardship costs through private philanthropy. Should your Board approve funding towards this acquisition, the WCB

requires the County deposit funds into escrow prior to its June 2nd WCB Board Meeting when the WCB is expected to authorize funding.

With your Board's approval, County staff and PLT will finalize terms of a Funding Agreement (Agreement) that addresses the following key terms:

1. County will deposit \$80,000 into an escrow account to be applied to the CE purchase price. If the CE acquisition does not close escrow within 120 days following the Funding Agreement Effective date, the County's contribution will be returned unless extended by mutual agreement of the parties.
2. PLT will acknowledge the County's contribution on CE sign(s) and other PLT promotional materials or literature, as appropriate.
3. The County will be permitted to accompany PLT on monitoring visits to assess compliance with terms, covenants, and conditions of the CE.

Staff believes this contribution towards acquisition of the CE is in the best interest of the County given it preserves additional open space property that meets both Legacy and PCCP objectives. The CE will protect in perpetuity the Oest Property's historic values, including current and future livestock grazing, oak woodland habitat, and scenic open space values. This acquisition is also supported by the Placer County Agricultural Commission. To proceed with the acquisition, your Board's approval of the Resolution is necessary to authorize the Director of Public Works and Facilities, or designee, to finalize and execute the Agreement, subject to approval by County Counsel, and to take all actions necessary to facilitate this transaction and implement provisions of the Agreement.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Financial participation in this acquisition is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15317 and 15325. These sections provide for the transfer of ownership of land to accept easements or fee title interests in order to maintain the open space character of an area and to preserve existing natural conditions and other resources. Each of these facts is a separate and independent basis for the Board's determination that the Board's actions are exempt from CEQA and the requested actions do not require further CEQA review.

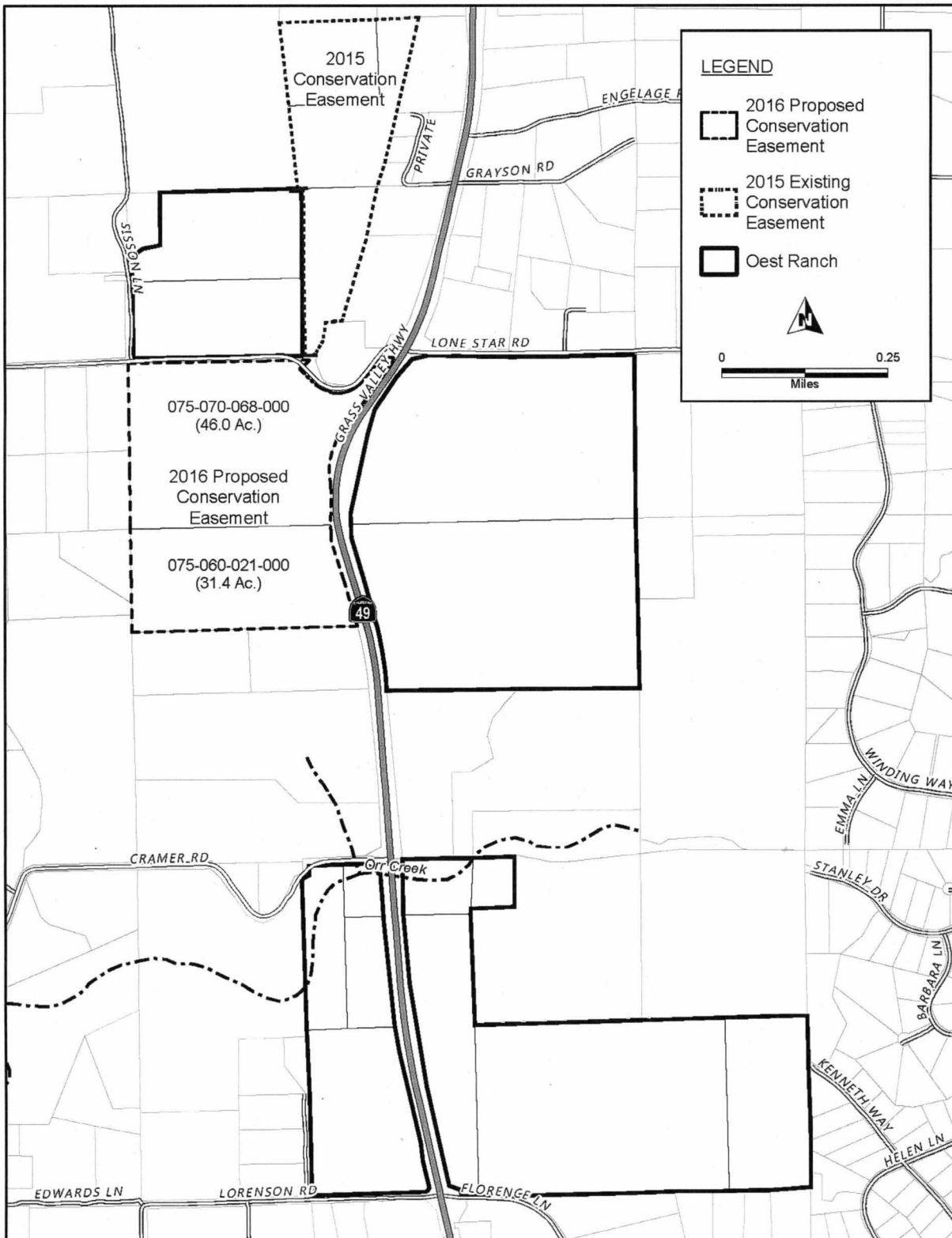
FISCAL IMPACT

Funding for the \$565,000 CE purchase price is being sought from WCB (\$485,000) and Placer County (\$80,000). The estimated total County project cost of \$85,000 includes staff and legal expenses, and will be funded from the Open Space Fund 1150 (\$81,000) and the Property Management FY 2014-15 Budget (\$4,000).

ATTACHMENTS

Oest Property
Oest Ranch Attributes
Resolution

Oest Property



Oest Ranch Attributes

Oest Ranch possesses the following attributes which are considered a priority to the Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program, Placer County Conservation Plan, and Placer County General Plan Objectives:

1. Agricultural: Oest Ranch is a working cattle ranch, operating on a mixture of dry and irrigated pasture.
2. Biological: Oest Ranch contains significant oak woodlands, which are the most diverse and rich biological resources in the Sierra Foothills. The potential exists to protect a north/south wildlife corridor between Oest Ranch and the Bear River, through conservation of the entire 437-acre Oest Ranch and the large Laursen holdings to the north. Similarly there is an east-west corridor for properties within the Coon Creek watershed. The Coon Creek watershed is a high priority conservation area for the PCCP because of the presence of state and federally listed fish species, and along with the Bear River, represents the only other watershed that connects the Sierra Nevada to the valley floor in one relatively unbroken contiguous corridor without any significant urban influences. PCCP covered species that will benefit from this acquisition include Chinook salmon, Central Valley steelhead, Swainson's hawk, Western pond turtle and potentially the California Red-legged frog and Foothill Yellow-legged frog. The County's proportional share of the acquisition will be counted towards the 47,300-acre conservation goal under PCCP.
3. Scenic/Historic: The Oest Ranch is one of the oldest continuously producing ranches in Placer County, dating back to the Gold Rush era. Traveling north on Hwy 49 as you leave the North Auburn area, the Oest Ranch provides the first large open-space vistas on both sides of the highway.
4. Open Space - Separation of Urban Areas: The Oest Ranch is the quintessential "green belt" property, which defines the North Auburn area by separating Auburn from the Lake of the Pines population center. The draft PCCP Reserve Map designates the Oest Ranch as part of the "Reserve Acquisition Area" for the purposes of conserving a large interconnected system of agricultural, open space, and species habitat in the County.

Before the Board of Supervisors County of Placer, State of California

In the matter of: Adopt a Resolution authorizing the Director of Public Works and Facilities, or designee, to execute the Funding Agreement and take all actions necessary to facilitate the acquisition of an agricultural conservation easement over 77.4 acres of the Oest Ranch

Resolution No.: _____

The following Resolution was duly passed by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer at a regular meeting held _____, by the following vote on roll call:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Signed and approved by me after its passage.

Chair, Board of Supervisors

Attest:

Clerk of said Board

WHEREAS, for consideration, the Oest Family desires to grant an Agricultural Conservation Easement (CE) over 77.4 acres located near the southwest corner of Lone Star Road and Highway 49 in Auburn, CA, described as APNs 075-070-068 and 075-060-021, to Placer Land Trust (PLT); and,

WHEREAS, PLT has applied and anticipates receipt of funding from the State of California's Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) in the amount of \$485,000 toward the CE's \$565,000 purchase price; and,

WHEREAS, PLT has requested funding in the amount of \$80,000 from Placer County toward the CE acquisition and has provided the County with a draft Funding Agreement for approval and execution; and,

WHEREAS, Staff believes pursuit of funding from the WCB and continued partnership with PLT is in the best interest of the County given this acquisition preserves additional open space property that meets both Legacy and Placer County Conservation Plan objectives.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Supervisors, County of Placer, State of California, does hereby authorize the Director of Public Works and Facilities, or designee, on its behalf to finalize and execute the Funding Agreement, subject to approval by County Counsel, and to take all actions necessary to facilitate this transaction and implement provisions of the Funding Agreement.



**COUNTY OF PLACER
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**

JOSHUA P. HUNTSINGER
Agricultural Commissioner
Sealer of Weights & Measures

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEMBERS

Tony Aguilar	Larry Jordan
Patricia Beard	William Morebeck
James Brenner	John Nitta
Dan Macon	Stewart Perry
Wayne Vineyard	

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May 9, 2016

The Honorable Robert M. Weygandt
Chairman, Placer County Board of Supervisors
175 Fulweiler Avenue
Auburn, CA 95603

Subject: Placer Legacy Financial Participation (77.4 acre Oest Family Trust)

Dear Chairman Weygandt:

On May 9, 2016 the Placer County Agricultural Commission voted unanimously to recommend the Placer County Board of Supervisors approve the proposed Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program's financial support of the Placer Land Trust's acquisition of an Agricultural Conservation Easement over approximately 77.4 acres (APNs 075-070-068 and 075-060-021) of land located in the North Auburn Area of Placer County. In addition to Placer County's contribution of \$80,000, the Wildlife Conservation Board will be contributing \$485,000 toward acquisition of the easement, and Placer Land Trust has received \$200,000 in private funding for perpetual monitoring and enforcement of the easement.

This 77.4 acre portion of the larger 437 – acre Oest Ranch is located at the southwest corner of Lone Star Road and Highway 49. This property is adjacent to the 36 – acre parcel previously placed under an Agricultural Conservation Easement that the County also participated in acquiring in 2015.

The property is utilized as a working cattle ranch, operating on a mixture of dry pasture and irrigated pasture. It also contains foothill oak woodland, grasslands, and irrigated pasture used for seasonal livestock grazing.

Financial support for the acquisition of an easement is consistent with the Placer County General Plan and Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program. The 77.4 acre easement would assist in maintaining agriculture as a viable part of the economy and expand the existing open space buffer between communities along Highway 49.

Sincerely,

Wayne Vineyard
Chairman